



Murder in Hills Avenue, 1932

189.23

c.34.6: Cambridge CRIME Chronicle, by Mike Petty

This is by no means a full account of crime. See also police c.34.7, courts c.34.9, Undergraduate excesses c.36.92

1888 11 16

Letter threatens “Jack the Ripper” treatment to lady [346.2.1]

1891 02

Arrest of Daisy Hopkins who’d escaped from Spinning House & is re-arrested, produces outcry in press & University official convicted of carelessness & ignorance in exercise of his powers; feelings run high & series of meetings called to sort out the matter [2.16]

1894

University & Corporation Act provides for concurrent action by Proctors & town police in arresting loose women & abolishes Vice Chancellor’s jurisdiction over them; Spinning House abolished[2.14, 1.5,2.15]

1899 04 19

The days of the Cambridge Spinning House are numbered. It is to be pulled down in order that a house of detention after the best approved modern ideas may arise on its site. There is no more stirring chapter in the history of modern Cambridge than that which this forbidding looking building in St Andrews Street recalls. It speaks of many things which the Cambridge of today is glad to forget. It is an ugly monument of an ugly feud between the authorities of the University and town. The feud is dead: would that the razing to the ground of the Spinning House were sufficient to efface all memory of it

1900

1901 12 06

The arrest was reported from Queenstown of a Cambridge man on a warrant charging him with felony. Detective-Sergt Bryne effected the arrest on the outward-bound American steamer. The accused was travelling as a saloon passenger under an assumed name. As is well-known the man held a position of trust at Messrs Foster's bank and was actively identified with politics and parochial movements in the Abbey Ward. His disappearance from Cambridge has been the subject of many rumours. Detective Marsh has been sent to Queenstown to bring the accused to Cambridge c01 12 10

1902 01 14

After being 'wanted' by the police for years a man who is supposed to be a suspicious character named Villiers, was arrested by Scotland Yard detectives at his residence on Trumpington Road, Cambridge. They searched the house for a considerable time without finding him. At last he was discovered concealed between the ceiling and the roof. To this secret hiding place he had gained access by a door secreted behind a piece of furniture. The arrest is in connection with the publication of obscene literature and prints. Since being removed to the station the man has died. CDN 1902 01 14

1902 04 24

'With detectives round the world' by Frank Longworth – capture at Cambridge of printer of objectionable books – 37 04 24b

1902 05 02

A deep feeling of horror spread like lightning through Cambridge when it was reported that a cook at a Cambridge college had committed suicide. Enquiries show he was fearful of being drawn into the hearing of the Cambridge meat case and made to become a witness against his own brother. This undoubtedly preyed upon his mind and he became exceedingly suspicious of any stranger entering the college hall. The other day a friend observed: "I see you have a new waiter". "No", he replied, "he is a detective shadowing me" 02 05 02

1902 12 04

The Provost of Kings said that whatever good had been done by the University Spinning House it was of a very rough and ready kind. It succeeded in arresting women in a course of evil, and sending them to their homes, but one could not say much for the humanising and Christianising influence that was brought to bear upon the women there. In any town there was a probability of evil and if they added 3,000 young men in their hey-day of youth, many of them without fixed principles of right and wrong, and a number of young women coming from bad homes and bearing an hereditary disposition for evil there must be some danger. 02 12 04

1904 04 08

A few days before Christmas a young man arrived in Bristol absolutely without means but soon learned from a firm of solicitors that he was the son of the late Rev E.A. Stephens of Cambridge and entitled to a huge fortune. But the gentleman must have lived here many years ago for clergymen who have seen long service do not remember him, his name does not appear in any University calendar and even members of the police force who have proverbial long memories do not recall him. The story recalls a hoax played on a drayman who lived in Cambridge. He was informed that an uncle had died and left him a fortune so he threw up his position and went to Portsmouth to conclude the formalities, only to learn that the fabulous fortune was a myth and he had been cruelly hoaxed. 14 04 08

1904 05 18

The unexpected death of a prisoner at the Cambridge Prison occasioned the holding of an inquest. The man's name appeared to be Patrick O'Shea, though as a matter of fact he had a variety of names – Nil,

Laughton, Carrington, MacDonald, MacArthur, Montmorency and Hassan Effendi. He gave his age as 45 and his occupation that of a labourer and was committed for trial for stealing money in Wisbech. Warder Andrews said he heard a noise from the cell and found the man apparently in a fit. Death was due to apoplexy. 04 05 18

1904 07 15

The publication of Mr John Sweeney's book 'At Scotland Yard' recalls one of the most sensational tragedies Cambridge has known. The detective mentions the arrest and subsequent death of the swindler who styled himself 'Dr Sinclair Roland' and resided at a well-furnished, expensively-rented house called Edenfield in Trumpington Road. It had been chosen for its security from observation and general utility as a hiding place. There was an elaborate system of cupboards and secret passages by which he could hide or escape. But the police blocked every exit, a systematic search was made and a secret panel discovered where the man was found. He called for a glass of water and fell dead, having taken poison which he carried in a ring. CDN 25.7.1904

1905 06 15

The whole of the Duchess of Westminster's missing jewellery has been discovered in Cambridge including a very valuable pearl necklace and twenty diamond brooches. Police arrested a Cambridge man formerly employed as a night watchman at Grosvenor House; they then went to a house in Priory Road and to a field up Newmarket Road where the jewellery was found. 05 06 15a & others

1905 08 05

The burglary scare in Romsey Town has caused several amusing and one dangerous incident. A gentleman was keeping an all-night watch for the burglar and about 1.30 a.m. thought he observed his quarry. At any rate a revolver which he had in his possession went off. The bullet sped across the street and through the window of a house opposite. It cut two holes in the hanging curtains, smashed a large fruit dish and ended its career in a photographic frame. 05 08 05e

1905 10 14

The Trumpington Road has an unenviable notoriety for being frequented by shady and suspicious characters. Lately the large houses have suffered depredations at the hands of one of the burgling fraternity. Police supervision should be strengthened: one constable was not sufficient. The Chief Constable said that being with easy reach of London they offered a tempting bait to the criminals of the metropolis. The man involved pretended to be collecting for a cricket club. He was today being tried at Exeter 05 10 14b

1905 11 16

Cambridge police have warned of a new fraud; people receive a letter from a man who claims to have served in the Cuban war and came to England bringing with him a trunk containing £39,000 which has been deposited in a bank. If the recipient will send enough money for the writer's daughter to collect it then she will give them a quarter of that sum. The swindle has gone on for years; the bait is so plausible that many simple people fall victim to the fraud. 05 11 16

1905 11 30

Two young women were charged with frequenting the streets of Cambridge for the purpose of prostitution. One explained she was a native of Dundee, living at a common lodging house; she had been a domestic servant at Newmarket but had to leave on account of illness. Being destitute she was obliged to 'go on the streets' for a living. 05 11 30a

1906 07 31

Burglar hunting as a popular amusement had 'caught on' in Cambridge. Large crowds gathered in the neighbourhood of Park Terrace expecting to see the police emerge with two or more stalwart ruffians who had the impudence to enter Mr Sturton's house and rifle his pockets. They are thought to be playing a skilful game of hide-and-seek with police in and out of the six houses which comprise part

of the Terrace; eager eyes are directed to the parapet and expectations entertained of seeing a desperate chase along the roof. But no one was seen. 06 07 31a

1906 11 12

With the death of John William Cooper Cambridge loses one of its most pronounced personalities. As a barrister in the Daisy Hopkins case he ruthlessly exposed the evils of the Spinning House and few can understand the amount of good work he did behind the scenes. Latterly folk have agreed that he was breaking up, but though he may have suffered physically he never showed signs that his mental vigour had diminished. 06 11 12a & b & c

1907 12 16

Musgrave, card sharp, arrested – stole from undergraduates at Bull Hotel – 07 12 16a, 07 12 28d

1908 11 20

A young married woman lies in Cambridge gaol accused of wilful murder. In the tiny parlour of a typical country cottage is the dead body of her year-and-four-month old baby, a bonny dark-eyed plumped-cheek babe, drowned in the filth of a cesspool. Upon a little bed in another room lies another little girl slowly recovering from the effects of immersion in the same cesspool. Too young to realise the terrible experience she has been through she murmurs “Mummy did it; she said it was best” CWN 08 11 20 [346.2.4]

1910

1910 04 09

“Cambridge an irresistible attraction for professional thieves down from London”; group caught loading stolen bicycles on train [346.2.5]

1910 03 11

A stable in Water Street, Old Chesterton, was the scene of a shocking tragedy. A 50-year-old labourer had been living with a 58 year-old woman who earned her living by travelling about the county with a caravan in the summer, visiting fairs, and in the winter time she hawked coal and coke about local villages. When he appeared in court his complexion stamped him at once as a man used to working in the open air. His face and neck were alike brick red in colour and seamed with thousands of wrinkles, the black hair was cut fairly short, but the grizzled moustache was rather ragged. He was dressed in corduroys and heavy boots. He had no collar or neck wrap and his vivid red shirt showed at the top of the sleeved waistcoat he was wearing. 10 03 11a & b

1910 06 03

The courtroom was packed for the trial of a man accused of murder at a stable in Water Street, Chesterton. A nearby house was lived in by a 58-year-old woman who earned her living by travelling about the country with a caravan in summer, visiting fairs, and in winter time she hawked coal and coke about local villages. A squabble with a 50-year-old labourer with whom she was living resulted in him cutting her brother’s throat with a carving knife. He was sentenced to hang. 10 06 03 b & c

1910 06 17

At the last stroke of eight o’clock in the morning James Henry Hancock paid the extreme penalty of the law for the murder of Alfred Doggett at Chesterton. The execution took place at the County Gaol, Castle Hill. Pierpoint was the executioner, assisted by his brother, and they accomplished their deadly work with marvellous celerity, death having been absolutely instantaneous. Only the Deputy Sheriff, the Governor of the Prison, the Prison Chaplain and Doctor were present but a crowd of several hundred assembled on the pavement opposite the Shire Hall. They kept their gaze fixed on the flag-staff, unaware that the practice of hoisting the black flag has been discontinued. Nor was the bell tolled. 10 06 17b

1910 06 17

It is 12 years since the extreme penalty of the law was last paid within the walls of the County Gaol. The last culprit was Walter Horsford, the notorious St Neots poisoner, who was hanged on 28th June 1898 for the murder of his cousin. Prior to that there was a long period during which the hangman was not called upon for it was as far back as December 1876 that Robert Browning was executed for the murder of a woman on Midsummer Common. The last public execution in the county was in March 1864 when a man was hanged for the murder of a girl at Whittlesey. Shortly after this the law was passed putting a stop to executions in public and the tendency now is for complete privacy 10 06 17c

1910 12 23

A gruesome relic has been discovered during renovations at the Hoop Hotel. It is a human skeleton grimly suggestive of a crime committed in days gone by, a victim's remains ingeniously hidden by a murderer. For hundreds of years generations of people have passed along Bridge Street recking nothing of the horrible trophy which lay some ten feet beneath the pavement. A workman discovered the bones of a woman placed just below the wall and floor of the wine cellar and above the foundations. 10 12 23

1913 04 11

A pathetic tragedy occurred in Cambridge when a German teacher committed suicide after killing his two children by shooting them with a revolver. His wife, to whom he was devoted, had died in February. He was an advanced Spiritualist and had written to the coroner stating that by the time he received the letter he and his children would have rejoined their loved one. He was firmly of the belief that the step he was taking was merely a means of reuniting the family. 13 04 11 p9 CIP [2.7]

1913 10 17

At the Assizes the top gallery was filled with women when a suffragette was accused of setting fire to a house in Storey's Way. She denied having started the blaze but had been at the site and dropped her watch. It was identified by her uncle, a Norwich policeman. Pink flannelette smelling strongly of paraffin had been wound round a ladder and set alight. Her coat smelled of paraffin. She asked the jury: "Do I look like a person who would go about with flannelette and cans of petrol and set fire to houses". She was convicted. 13 10 17 p8 [346.1.9]

1913 11 07

Frederick Seekings, a Brampton man was hanged in Cambridge Gaol for the murder of his wife. Mr T.W. Pierpoint was the executioner and the hanging was expeditiously carried out, death being instantaneous. Very little interest in the execution was shown by the public. There was but a mere handful of people outside the Shire Hall, chiefly composed of errand boys and youths. The black flag was not hoisted nor was the prison bell tolled, and there was nothing whatever to indicate that anything unusual was taking place. 13 11 07 p08 CIP [346.1.10,2.8]

1916 02 09

One of the most astonishing results of the war is the effect it has, had on crime. This matter has been commented upon at every Assize and Quarter Sessions for the last twelve months or so. The calendars have been so light as to cause astonishment. Serious crime seems almost to have come to an end, and the presentation to the Chairmen of Quarter Sessions of white gloves as evidence of there being no prisoners for trial has become quite a common occurrence. As a consequence of this change in our normal conditions, some of His Majesty's prisons have hardly any prisoners, in them, and as a war-time economy, it is proposed to close some of them for the time being. Cambridge is to be added to the number closed during the period of the war. It is a remarkable proposition, although we should like to think that we could get along without a prison in our midst 16 02 09 CIPof

1919 10 22

Frank Fyson on trial for attempted murder of his wife and attempted suicide Christ's Pieces; he from Warboys and had toured with the VC Cockerel – 19 10 22e

1919 10 29

Munitions Ministry robbed. Wholesale thefts of Government property were described at the Shire Hall, Cambridge, on Saturday morning, when four prisoners were charged with stealing bedding, bedsteads, and various other articles the property of the Ministry of Munitions. In the corridors outside the County Divisional Police Court were heaps of blankets, sheets, pillows, bed ticks and iron bedsteads, and inside the court was another miscellaneous collection of articles, which were exhibits in the case. The bulk of the property was stolen from the Coprolite Works at Trumpington, but a number of the articles had been removed from the munitions works at Gretna Green, and conveyed by the prisoners to Trumpington. The thefts were admitted and three of the prisoners were sent to gaol. The fourth offender—a lad of 15—was bound over. 19 10 29 CIPof, Detailed trial – 19 10 29a

1920

1920 03 24

Detective Lazarus Marks reminiscences – 45 years a tec, major article – Ch 20 03 24a

1921 07

King Street murder: Alice Lawn murdered. King Street murder funeral – 21 08 03c; Reports & trial – 21 08 03d,e 21 08 10a, b, e 21 08 24b,c,d 21 09 07c 21 09 14a,b 21 09 21a,b ; 21 10 19a,b,c; 21 10 19j' not guilty – 21 10 26c. Photos – 21 08 03b, 21 08 17d, 21 10 19f, 21 10 26a. Suspect in court – 21 08 24a, 21 09 21d

1930

1930 06 03

A terrible shooting affair occurred at King's College this afternoon. An undergraduate shot a Cambridge Detective-Sergeant twice with an automatic, then shot his tutor through the heart and himself in the head. The tutor died instantly, the undergraduate is not expected to live but the policeman is likely to make a normal recovery. The cause of the trouble is at present a mystery 30 06 03a [2.4]

1930 06 04

The third of the men in the King's College shooting sensation, Det-Sergt Willis, has died from the effects of his wounds. The undergraduate assailant died yesterday from a bullet wound in the head whilst the tutor was killed instantly from a bullet through his heart. The undergraduate was heavily in debt and went away from Cambridge nine days ago on a motor-cycle obtained on credit. He was being interviewed by the policeman when the tragedy occurred 30 06 04

Memories of Detective Ives who was with Willis – 55 08 09

1930 06 04

A London lady has thrown fresh light on the movement of the undergraduates involved in the double shooting at King's College. They had knocked on her door at three in the morning; their clothes were torn and dishevelled and they said they were down and out, having been walking about on the Thames Embankment. They told her they were in trouble at Cambridge, but only through disposing of some property that did not belong to them. Both had pistols and said they would end things then rather than face fresh trouble, but she had dissuaded them. 30 06 04

1930 06 06

Further revelations of the escapades of the undergraduate involved in the King's College shooting have caused University authorities to make searching inquiries into the habits of undergraduates. The lad had surrounded himself with an atmosphere of false romance; he paid frequent visits to the Bell Hotel at Mildenhall. The landlord's daughter described him as 'a very nice boy, but terribly eccentric'. He always came in second-hand cars, but never in the same car twice, and spent time playing the gramophone. He always left in time to get back to college before the gates closed 30 06 06b

1930 08 19

Will of Wollaston, the murdered don – CDN 30 08 19

1931 02 27

Over 100 attended a funeral service for a young Freshman whose mysterious death has caused such a sensation throughout the country. Press and public were excluded but a crowd gathered and police had some difficulty in controlling the traffic. He had been found lying dead on the floor of his room, gagged and bound in an elaborate manner with numerous handkerchiefs, a length of puttee, and a wire flex. Members of the Pentacle Club, the University Magicians' Society have been interrogated & Sir Bernard Spilsbury, the famous Home Office pathologist has been called in. 31 02 27d-g-h

1931 03 06

Sidney Sussex student death verdict 31 03 06f –h

1932 02 02

A London sales manager was charged with demanding £500 by menaces from a Cambridge resident referred to in court as 'Mr Z'. After being told that he was going to be 'beaten up' by a gang of bookmakers Mr Z paid the man £500 in the presence of two hidden police officers. He told the court he was still going in fear of personal violence. The prosecutor remarked "It looks like an American gangster film" 32 02 20a & b

1932 05 31

Mass murder, Hills Road – 32 05 31a, b, 32 06 01 & b

1937 05 17

A police cordon was thrown round the Regal Cinema in the early hours of Sunday morning after PC Parker saw a man's head out of a bottom floor window. Two men ran away; one was brought down with a rugby tackle by a passing cyclist, Arthur Wright, another punched Inspector Witham with a knuckleduster. One was alleged to have packets of gelignite in his possession, another was found with fuse detonators. Later Scotland Yard's Flying Squad arrested a fifth man. 37 05 17a

1938 03 21

A witness at Cambridge Police Court took the Confucianist oath by smashing a saucer in the witness-box. Then the clerk said: "You shall tell the truth, and the whole truth – the saucer is broken, and if you do not tell the whole truth your soul will be broken like the saucer". Mr Fan Hung testified that he was a research student at Fitzwilliam Hall and that money had been taken from his wallet in his lodgings. A fellow-lodger admitted the theft and was bound over. 38 03 21

1960

1961 03 22

The strong room at Barclay's Bank in Chesterton Road was blown open and £75,000 in notes stolen in the City's biggest bank robbery. The raiders piled stacks of office furniture and cushions to muffle the noise of the explosion which blew a hole three feet across in the strong room wall, then crawled through to help themselves to the money. Arrangements have been made to transfer the silver and copper coinage the thieves left behind. 61 03 22

1965

Drugs squad set up when drugs menace first began to emerge on streets [4.12]

1966 02 22

Risk of drug-taking by students in college hostels and lodgings – teacher fined for house used for smoking Indian hemp; "beatnik parasites", Clarendon St– 66 02 22a, b, 66 02 23b

1966 04 22

“500 youths smoke hashish” says solicitor, police set up drugs squad, marijuana sold in city centre pub for 2/6; police raid Alley Club & seize 200 pills, proprietor prosecuted [4.8,4.9,6.8]

1966 04 23

500 Cambridge youths, including undergraduates, smoke Indian hemp; police raid lodgings – 66 04 22; police doing all they can to cut out drugs – 66 04 23# c.34.6

1967 02 11

Synthetic LSD made in Chemistry Labs says letter in Granta [4.10, 4.14, 6.9]
[4.7]

1970

1970

foundation of largest LSD ring in world laid in Cambridge, (ended up supplying 90% British & 50% world consumption, “Operation Julie”, men convicted Feb 1978) [4.14]

1970 02 14

Garden House riot: police make truncheon charge against mob of undergraduates who surged forward pinning score constables against shattered plate-glass windows, £2,276 damage Garden House Hotel - 70 02 14, 14a, 14b trial – 70 06 24 [369.22.12]

“Garden House Riot changed course of events; afterwards student violence died off; Police invoked Riot Act, not used for years, Judge Melford Stevenson said it most complete example of intelligent young people getting involved in complete bloody nonsense ... passed deterrent sentences

1970 07 03

Greek demonstration – 6 students jailed, two sent borstal – 70 07 03, 03a,b; clash with townspeople – 70 07 06; verdict – appeal rejected – 70 08 19

1971 02 08

Jewel raid at Saqui & Lawrence, raiders break through wall to steal £5,000 rings – 71 02 08

1974 12 009

The rapist terrorising girls in Cambridge’s bed-sit land claimed his fourth victim in two months when he struck in the Newnham area of the city yesterday. It was the fifth attack on single girls living alone. Four have been raped and one fought her attacker off on the doorstep. The man leading the 20-strong special police squad, Detective Superintendent Bernard Hotson said today: “We are looking for an extremely sick and dangerous man” 74 12 09

1975 10 03

“Cambridge Rapist” convicted following attacks between Oct 1974 & June 1975 [4.5]

1975 11 20

The first cannabis resin distillery to be found in Cambridge was discovered when drugs squad detectives raided a house on the north side of the city. After a tip-off police surrounded a private house in a residential area. Inside they found various pieces of equipment along with drugs substances. They took away tubing and bottles which forensic scientists are examining. They believe distilled resin has been used to impregnate non-drug vegetable matter and foodstuffs for consumption by drug users. Police regard their find as important in a city where soft drug abuse is fairly widespread 75 11 20

1979 03 09

“Cambridge a soft touch for hard drugs” [5.1]

1979 10 17

Chief Supt Jock Proctor who did the most to contain the drugs problem in Cambridge retires from the police in December. In 1966 he formed a Drugs Squad to combat what was then a new and growing problem. Other agencies joined to set up a proper containment procedure which has been copied elsewhere. It was unheard of in those days for police, social workers and psychiatrists to meet together with addicts, parents and the clergy but soon a basis of trust was established and worried parents would take their youngsters to a police station for advice, rather than prosecution CEN 17.10.1979

1980

1980 01 23

The Cambridge police Patrol Group was set up in 1977. It is allocated specific targets and is free to concentrate on them until the problems are solved. Following outbreaks of crime such as handbag snatching or stolen bicycles they will 'flood' an area in an intensive detection campaign. The results are impressive with 97 arrests in recent months and a drop of 400 in the number of crimes recorded last year coupled with an increase of 500 in the number of prisoners arrested. 80 01 23

1980 06 30

Sea Cadets have discovered a hoard of sunken treasure worth thousands of pounds in the River Cam. Their boat's engine failed and it was found that a fur wrap had fouled the propeller. Whilst attempting to free it they discovered parts of a suitcase containing silver cups, candelabra and boxes of jewels. Police put a guard on the river until divers could carry out a full search. It is thought to be the proceeds of a major crime and is now locked away at Cambridge police station 80 06 30b

1981 04 21

Three valuable painting of Henry VI, Henry VII and Henry VIII have been stolen from King's College, Cambridge. All are contemporary works in oil on wood or panel. They were taken along with their frame from the college's main hall and people thought they had been removed for cleaning. 81 04 21a

1981 05 12

Glue-sniffing first came to this country about 10 years ago and there have been isolated outbreaks since then, but the revival of the craze among a group of Cambridge youngsters has caused concern. Police say there are no more than a dozen involved and it is not a major problem yet. One 14-year-old punk, a veteran glue-sniffer of three months, admitted stealing pots of glue and said "My mother doesn't want me to do it but I just like it and don't care" 81 05 12 [5.3]

1985

Neighbourhood watch scheme, no.1 at Chesterton [4.14]

1986 06 09

150 march re violence at night [Misc.4.1]

1988 11 03

Ambulance chief claims increased violence in streets çCEN 3.11.88